

Women's Leadership In Reconciliation And Peacemaking - DMZ Peace Park

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Seventy years after the Korean war, North and South Korea are still not united. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) incorporates territory in both what is now North and South Korea. It was created by pulling back the opposing forces 1.2 miles (2 km) along each side of the cease-fire line as it existed at the end of the Korean War (1950 - 53). The DMZ runs for about 150 miles (240 km) across the peninsula, from the mouth of the Han River on the west coast to a little south of the North Korean town of Kaesong on the east coast.



In the 4th International Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) forum under the theme, Women's Leadership in Reconciliation and Peacemaking - "DMZ Peace Park: Creating Bridges for a Unified Korea," two speakers from South Korea and two commentators from Japan and Switzerland respectively shared their insight about what it would take to transform the DMZ into a thriving haven for humans and nature while also fostering reconciliation and reunification on the Korean Peninsula. The program took place on June 7, 2022 and drew in the participation of 411 participants from nine countries around the world.

The forum moderator, Mrs. Moriko Hori, President of WFWP Japan, convened the program by highlighting the intention of the forum. She stated, "Today's webinar was created with the hope that the DMZ will be created into a peace garden that will be the first step in unifying the Korean peninsula. And it will be a time to examine how women will participate in reconciliation and peacebuilding between the two Koreas."

With these words, the program began with opening remarks from Mrs. Angelika Selle, President of WFWP USA. She warmly welcomed the distinguished speakers and worldwide audience to the program. She highlighted that the founders of WFWP were born in North Korea before the division, and themselves experienced the horrors of the Korean War and the North Korean communist regime. As a result, they have strived for peaceful reunification of their homeland. She also quoted from Dr. Hak Ja Han's memoir: "The line of lamentation that divides the Korean Peninsula and separates blood relatives is a geographical line, but that is superficial. The real division is over world views and values. It is the fierce confrontation between atheism and theism, over the question of whether or not God exists." Mrs. Selle emphasized that in order to foster and maintain peace, women's participation in civil society must play a pivotal role as a bridge.

The first speaker, Professor Soon-mi Choi, is a graduate of Unification and North Korean studies and a professor at Pyeonghwa University and part of the unification research department at Ajou University in Gyeonggi province, South Korea. Professor Choi began by giving a detailed historical background of the DMZ and after which she explained that there are many attractive elements to using the DMZ as a tourism resource. If it is used peacefully, it will be possible to resolve military conflicts between the two Koreas. She emphasized that one of the reasons why various plans have been announced but rarely realized is that the armistice agreement prevents South Korea from unilaterally exercising its jurisdiction over the DMZ. In order for any plans to be carried out, the North must also be on board and this has to be done with regard to both domestic and international law.



Dr. Guk Hwangbo, Universal Peace Federation Director for Gyeonggi and Gangwon provinces in South Korea, was the second speaker. He presented on the DMZ Peace Garden Project, which embodies the substantial dream and ideal of peace for the Korean Peninsula. This project will be centered on the Cheolwon region in South Korea and Pyonggang region in North Korea. Dr. Hwangbo explained in detail the historical significance of the Cheolwon region to both North and South Korea and also its focal point of being easily accessible from any parts of the peninsula. The concept of the Peace Garden Project is to create a state-of-the-art ecological area with advanced agricultural smart farms, a sustainable industrial complex, and residential areas, as well as tourist attraction points like the memorial hall and illuminated gardens to honor those who fought and died for peace on the peninsula. Realization of this project will not only benefit South Korea but also solve and support North Korea in its fight against chronic food shortage and malnutrition. This peace garden would create a flourishing community for the joint prosperity of Korean citizens. He emphasized though that this is not a short term goal but a long-term vision as both governments have to agree on what the key steps are in actualizing the project. The first phase of the project is already done and ongoing talks are being held for the second phase. He promised that at a later date, he will be able to share in detail more promising news.

Following these exciting presentations, we had our first commentator Mrs. Hiroko Oizumi, a former house representative member of Japan. In her response, she emphasized that the DMZ Peace Park, although an amazing initiative that will foster unification between the two Koreas, needs continuous efforts from both nations to bring this project to fruition. She also shared that Japan should also get on board in ways besides just financial support. Mrs. Oizumi raised a key point that youth, especially university students from around the world, and women should engage in discussions about how to ensure that the DMZ Peace Park is a thriving hub for humanity.

Our final commentator was Dr. Anna Grichting, a PhD in Urbanism from Harvard University and an active member of WFWP Geneva. She talked about the following important frameworks to the peace park initiative: Co-creation with nature, a geocentric approach, nature-based design, engagement design, renewable reuse, landscape and ecological urbanism. She shared that we should find novel imaginative ways of spatially representing diverse, nonhuman agencies as we strive for peace on the Korean Peninsula. She concluded her sharing by reflecting on an experience she had while at the DMZ where she saw two cranes dancing. This to her symbolized that one day, Korea will dance together.

All the presentations and sharings were profound and ignited many questions from the audience and some of which were answered during the program.

Mrs. Margie Moon, WFWP President of subregion 2 Korea, gave the concluding statement highlighting that the women of this era realize the value of an ideal world of peace, love and freedom and for this reason, will continue to work together.

In the end, an action step for the audience was introduced by Mrs. Hori, the moderator. She introduced the 1% Love Share Project, a campaign to eradicate poverty through participants setting aside 1% of their income for people in greater need all over the world. With that the forum concluded.

[Watch the event here](#)